

## The Fishing Scene

by David Cutler

There are enough cliches in fishing to fill a Swampscott Dory but there are two worth considering.

Ten per cent of the fishermen catch 90 per cent of the fish. Write that down and tuck it inside your tackle box next to the plastic worms or the No. 2 sinkers.

Cliche number two, the corollary asks you to believe that fishing, unlike bowling, is a pristine, passive affair made for those who pretend the lawnmower is broken so they can snooze in the hammock. Cliche number two is bunk.

While the rest of us ask "What's biting?" the 10 per centers study temperatures, times and tides. When the action slows, they move or change technique. They don't keep "non keepers" and they don't saddle up to those who are catching fish. Ten per centers tend to be loners, knowing that fishing is not a committee undertaking.

Some people think of polo as the elitist sport in this country. Nonsense! The real snobs of the world wear funny hats and carry \$400 bamboo fly rods. They're surf men who work the beaches at night and sneer at the "Pilgrims" who struck out at the same place that afternoon. They're the men and women who chase the giant bluefin tuna and complain about the one fish-per-boat-per-day rule set down by the boys in Washington.

You haven't met a snob until you greet the blank stare of the gent with a couple of bull stripers slung over his shoulder and ask "Where?"

"Out there," he says thumbing to the North Atlantic.

He means, "Find out for yourself rookie."

And he's right too. Even some condescending advice from a ten per center won't help much if you don't pay attention to the rules. In summer, Massachusetts offers among the best fishing in the world, and if you are new or not yet counted among the elite, here is a sample of what's available.

### FRESH WATER

Trout? You missed them. It being June, most of the rainbows and browns stocked by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife have gone deep. The best advice is to wait until the fall when trout fishing reaches its peak (that's a hint from a ten per center).

If you insist on trout now, try some of the ponds in Myles Standish State Park, Plymouth, or on the Cape which just happens to have the best trout fishing in Massachusetts. The hatch will be out in mid June and that bodes well for fly fishermen. Otherwise, you must get yourself a boat and troll deep. Early morning catches from the shore will yield little.

Outside of Plymouth and its suburbs (Carver & Plympton), there is not good trout fishing on the

South Shore other than a few brookies in the South River (Marshfield) or in Scituate's Bound Brook. The Jones River in Kingston, holds sea-run brown trout but again, wait until the fall.

For "sweetwater" anglers this is the time for bass, and the bass fishing is best in Plymouth and on the Cape. Don't overlook Jacob's Pond in Norwell, the upper North River or some of the ponds in Wamptauck State Park. Largemouths are your prey and will take to plastic worms worked slowly or "jerked" from the bottom. Choose stumpy areas.

Pickerel are most everywhere. So are sun fish; and the upper North River is loaded with white perch. Smallmouth bass can be found in some Cape ponds, but you'll do better in Quabbin Reservoir. Horn pout (tasty) and bluegills (ugh!) are also plentiful in local waters.

Largemouths provide most of the action, however. There are a lot of small, privately-owned ponds on the South Shore that contain bass weighing up to seven pounds but I can't mention them for fear of alienating subscribers. Instead, find a pond owner and make yourself friendly.

And for those with vision, we remind you that the New England record for largemouth bass — 15½ pounds — was taken from a pond in Carver. Forget which one, but there are many choice places to try down there if you don't mind a trip to the hinterlands.

Don't try anything in freshwater without obtaining a fishing license from your local town clerk.

### SALT WATER

The pickings are better in the salt and will stay that way throughout the summer.

Be quick and you can catch yourself some codfish from most anywhere: in Plymouth and Duxbury Bays, off the Gurnet, Green Harbor, the North River, the cliffs and the Glades. Anywhere along the coast. Cod are a cold water fish and are moving deep now, but they're still available. Clams and seaworms will work, providing you stay on the bottom. Jig when you go deep.

Pollock, another cold water fish, are an unsung species that deserve their status — bland taste and bland fight. But they're available most everywhere as well and will accept seaworms, a clam or a slowly trolled lure at night. Go heavy on the seasoning when you get them into the baking pan.

Mackerel used to be plentiful until they were mauled by bluefish and gobbled up by foreign fishing fleets. Optimists say they have made a comeback over the past two summers, so perhaps this season will see a return. Mackerel show up when the water warms and put up a worthy fight on light tackle. They will accept a

seaworm, but a mackerel jig works better. Keep it about mid depth. Mackerel meat, though dark, has a pleasant flavor if the cook can cook.

More important, however, is the fact that mackerel make wonderful bait for striped bass.

Forget the bluefin tuna or the swordfish. The king of the game fish around here is the striped bass. It is the mystique fish of New England, and if your territory includes the Cape and the Islands, nowhere is there better striped bass fishing in the world. But you must know what you're doing. If you don't, hire someone who does.

In June, small stripers — the schoolies — arrive up and down the coast. Try small plugs — Rebels or buck tails — in Plymouth or Duxbury Bays and if they don't work, try drifting with seaworms. You can also troll with plastic tubes or hoochies. Always fish the incoming or outgoing tides.

Stripers will roam wherever there are baitfish, so that means the entire coast is your hunting ground. The North River will offer as much as anyplace on the South Shore, though you would do well not to overlook Hull Gut, the South River and Boston Harbor.

Striper fishing around the Boston Harbor Islands is usually best at night. In Cohasset, check on those boulders pushing through the surf and keep checking them out. Eventually you'll succeed.

Should you fail locally, try the Cape: Barnstable Harbor, the Race Provincetown, off the Pamet River and in Buzzards Bay. If that doesn't work, try the rips between Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket and if that fails take up golf.

Whatever you do, hurry. Striper fishing is best in June and won't peak again until the fall.

Other species. Well, we have tautog which is supposed to be a Rhode Island fish but doesn't seem to know that. Small, nuisance tautog are all along the rocky coast. Bigger ones are available in Duxbury Bay. If you fish the Clark's Island Channel on the outgoing tide. Try drifting seaworms.

Flounder are omnipresent and easy to catch. Use a speck of a seaworm on a small hook and get down on the bottom. If there's nothing there, move on. Best bet, aside from Boston Harbor, is the North River on the incoming tide. If you absolutely can't afford the price of a seaworm, shine a cranberry for bait. Flounder will go for cranberries, the scientists say so.

What else? Squeteage or weakfish are in Buzzards Bay and more likely farther south. You may bump into one locally but don't tell the wife you're going for weakfish off Cohasset Harbor. She'll suspect something. Bluefin tuna will be here in July for those who can afford the chase, and for the super



Photo by Greg Derr

rich, there are swordfish off Nantucket.

For the rest of us, when the striped bass fishing slows and we tire of picking up flounder, there is the almighty bluefish.

Pound for pound, the bluefish is the most vicious fish in the world. When those marauding schools move up the coast, nothing gets in the way. Pesticides have been blamed for reducing the striped bass population in recent years and the charge is true, but bluefish are to blame as well. As magnificent as they are, striped bass do not hang around when the massive schools of blues move in as they have over the past seven or eight years.

Blues are everywhere too and will take most anything. You can troll for them at any level; you catch them on top with a popping plug. They'll gobble seaworms, mackerel or any other bait fish you offer. A couple of years ago, one boy caught a blue on a hotdog.

If you do any kind of serious fishing this summer, you will eventually run into a school of bluefish. And if it's blues you crave when the doldrums set in around late July, get a boat to Race Point and troll. You'll haul in a boatload. If you have never caught a bluefish before, be careful. They are armed with sharp teeth that can snap off a finger.

A lot of ten per centers damn the blue for chasing away the bass and other species. The indictment is true but why bother about it. Bluefish are here and want to stay. They put up a fierce fight when hooked, and aside from the striped bass, are the best game fish we have.

Good fishing.